



US011105590B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Bigby et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 11,105,590 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** ***Aug. 31, 2021**

(54) **MODULAR ILLUMINATION AND AIMING APPARATUS**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.
This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **16/996,680**
(22) Filed: **Aug. 18, 2020**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**
US 2020/0378726 A1 Dec. 3, 2020

Related U.S. Application Data
(60) Continuation of application No. 16/459,761, filed on Jul. 2, 2019, now Pat. No. 10,782,100, which is a division of application No. 15/142,597, filed on Apr. 29, 2016, now Pat. No. 10,386,160.
(60) Provisional application No. 62/155,964, filed on May 1, 2015.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
F41G 11/00 (2006.01)
F41G 1/35 (2006.01)
F41G 1/36 (2006.01)
(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC *F41G 11/001* (2013.01); *F41G 1/35* (2013.01); *F41G 1/36* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC F41G 1/35; F41G 1/36; F41G 1/34; F41G 1/345; F41G 11/001
USPC 362/110
See application file for complete search history.

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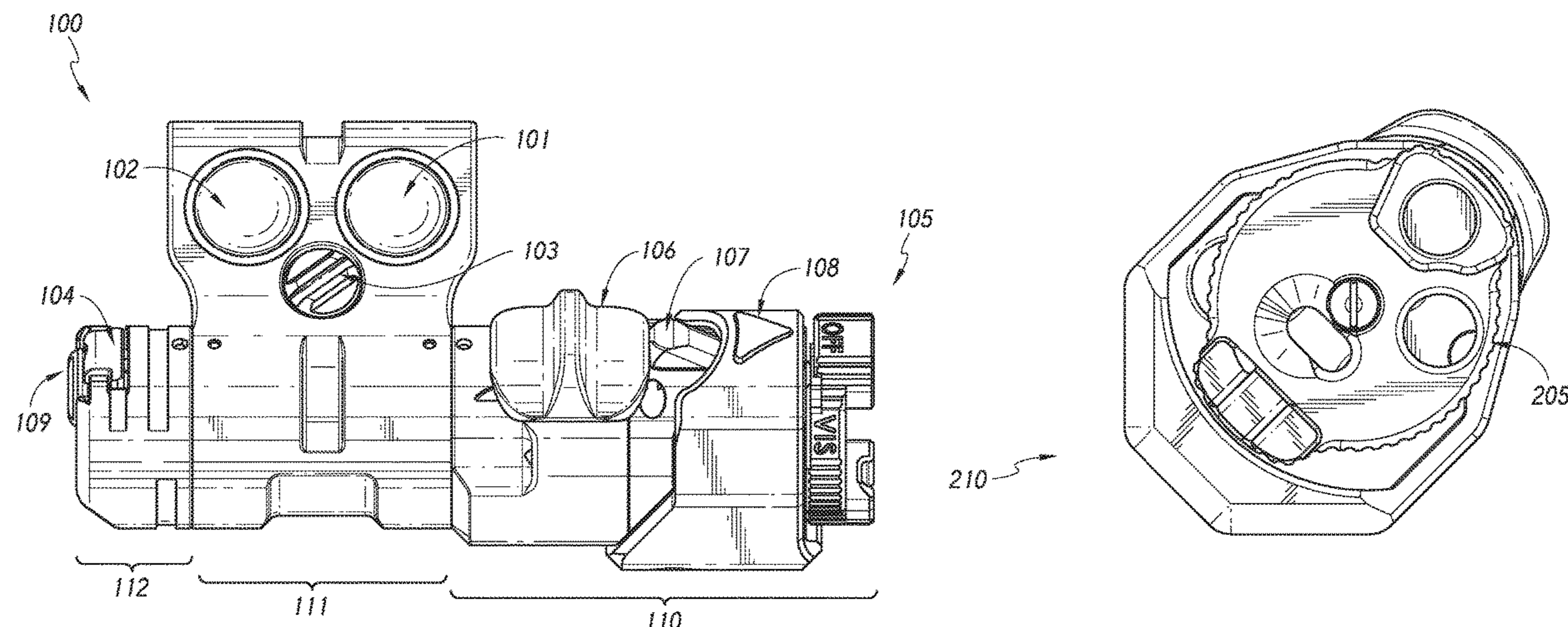
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(57) **ABSTRACT**
A modular illumination and aiming apparatus, a preferred embodiment of which includes an optical head module, mounting module, and an end cap module. The modular illumination and aiming apparatus is configured to be quickly and intuitively adjusted by a user in response to changing target and environmental conditions. The modular illumination and aiming apparatus is configured to be ergonomically supportive such that a user may maintain a consistent firing grip while activating the illumination and aiming functions. The optical head module is configured to allow the user to change radiation types by adjusting an end cap. The alignment mechanism in the optical head module for the radiation source and optics is configured to provide a robust and zero-play optical mount in order to resist recoil and general physical shock.

20 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



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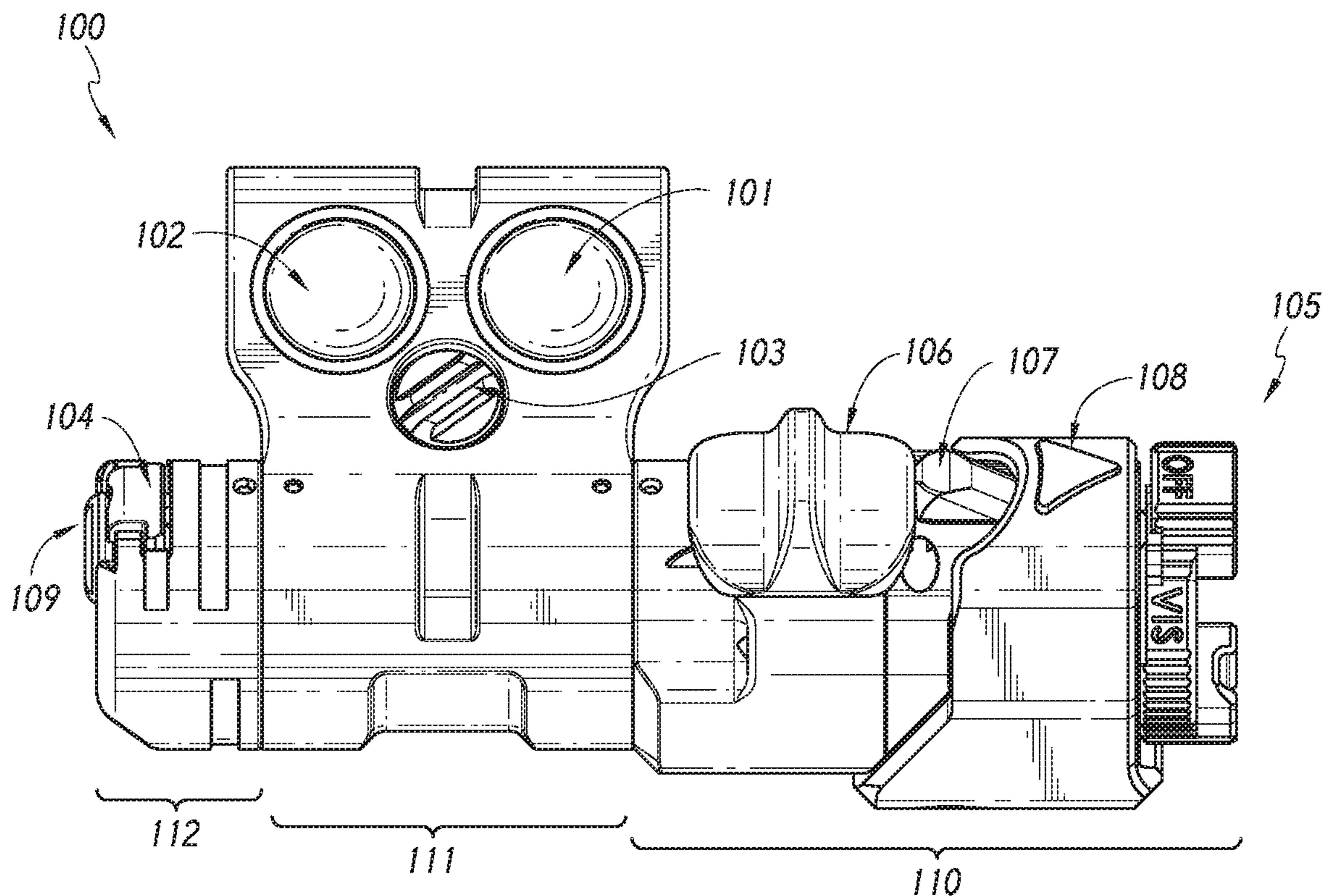


FIG. 1A

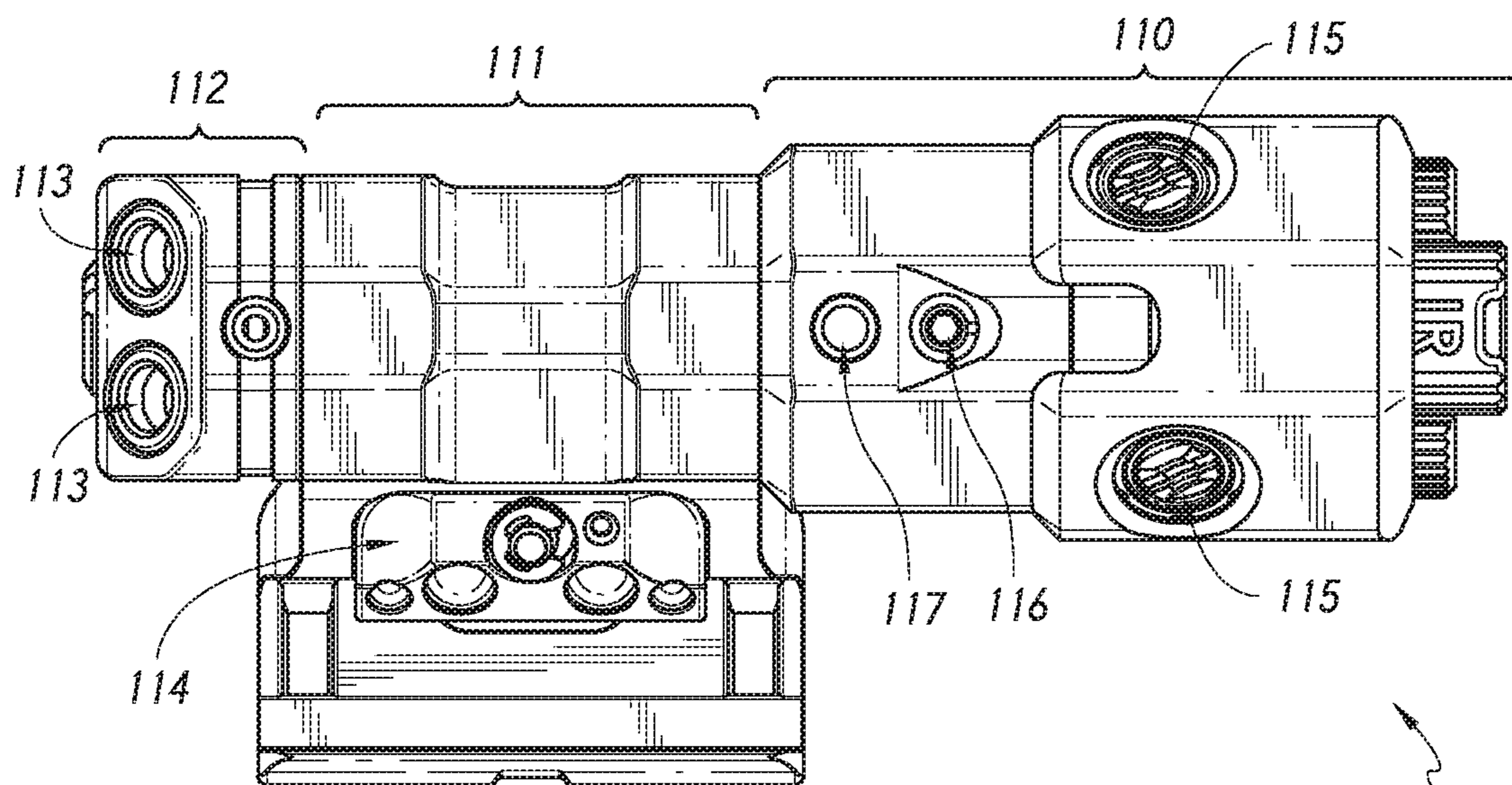


FIG. 1B

100

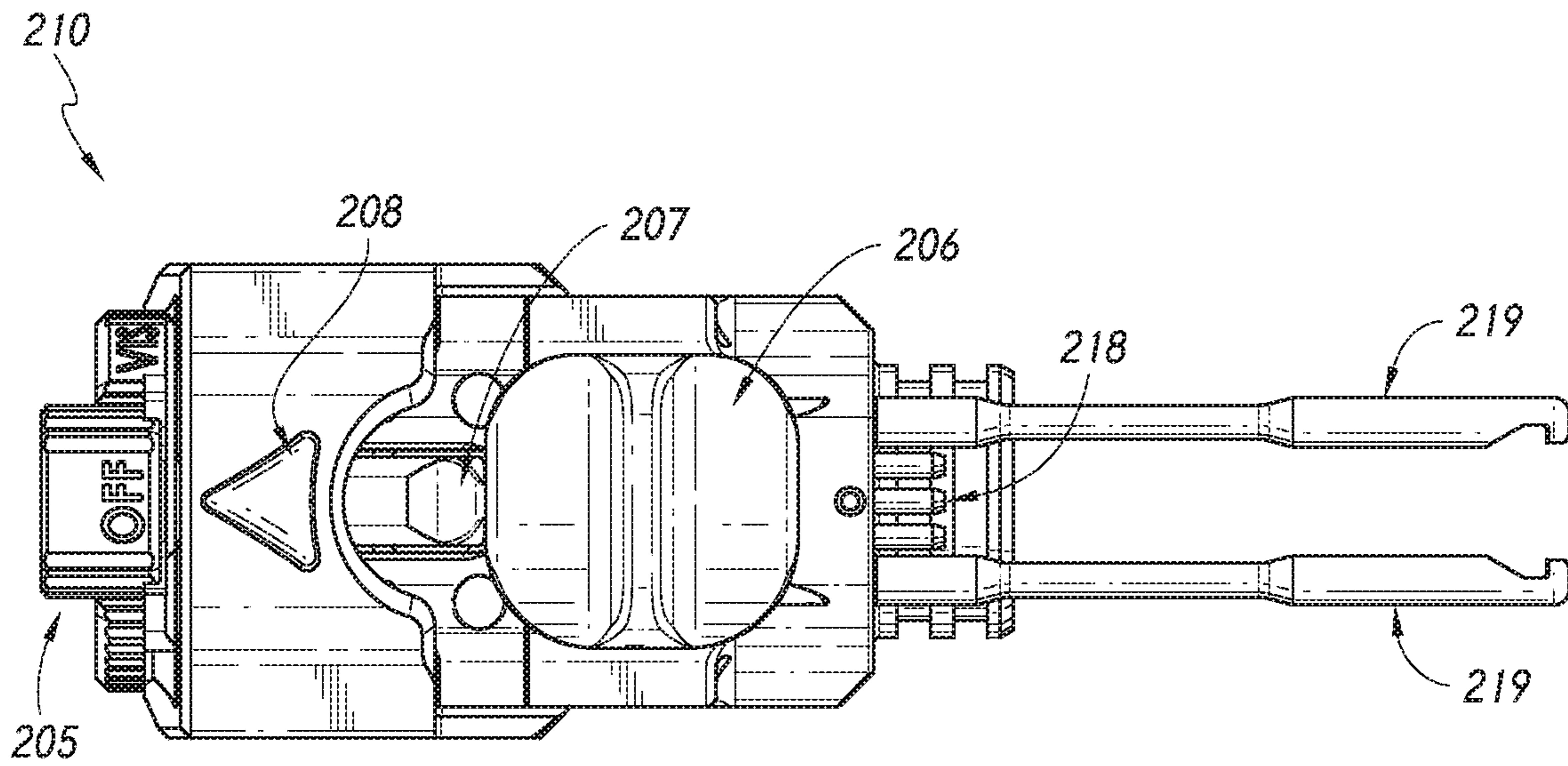


FIG. 2A

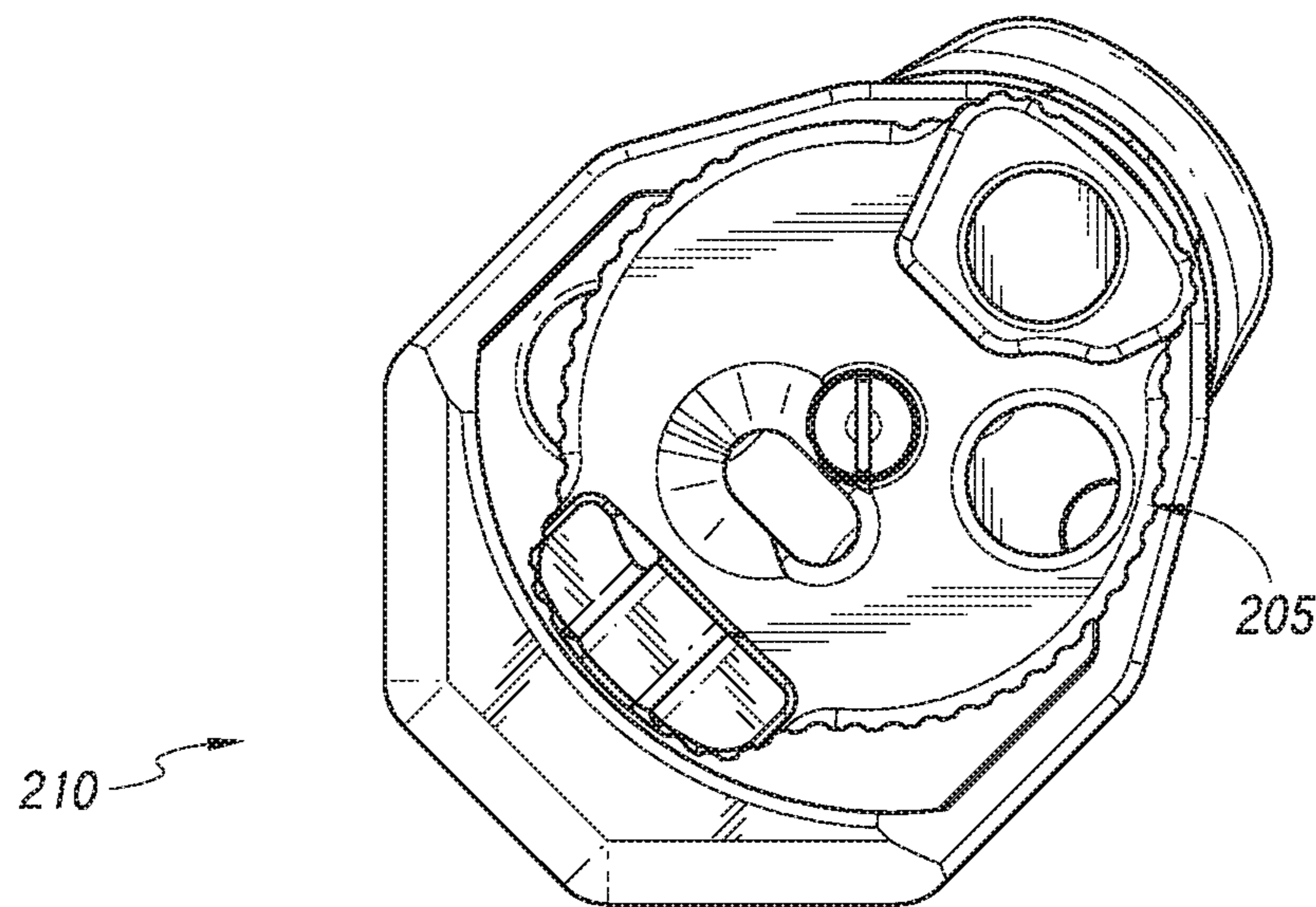


FIG. 2B

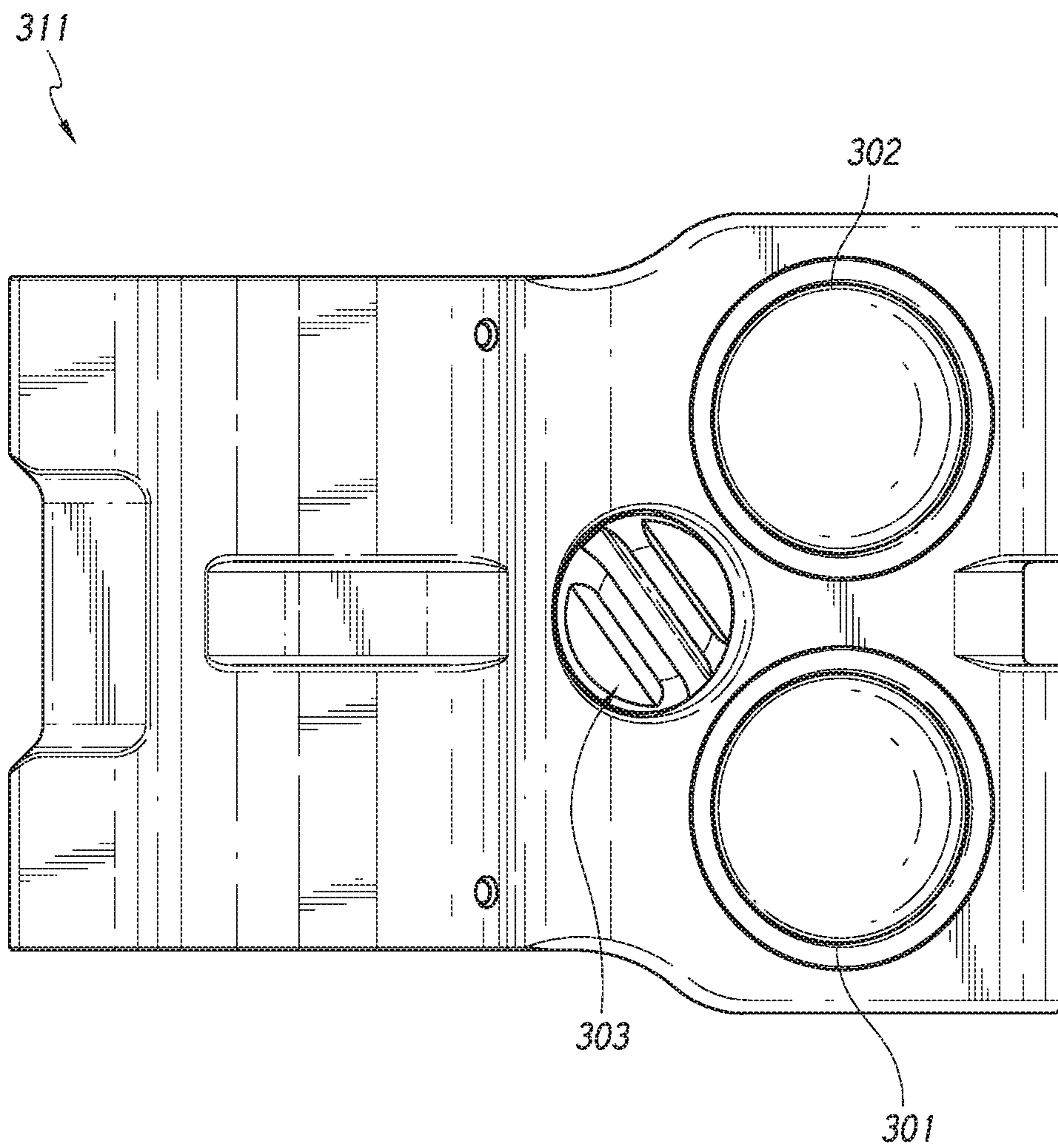
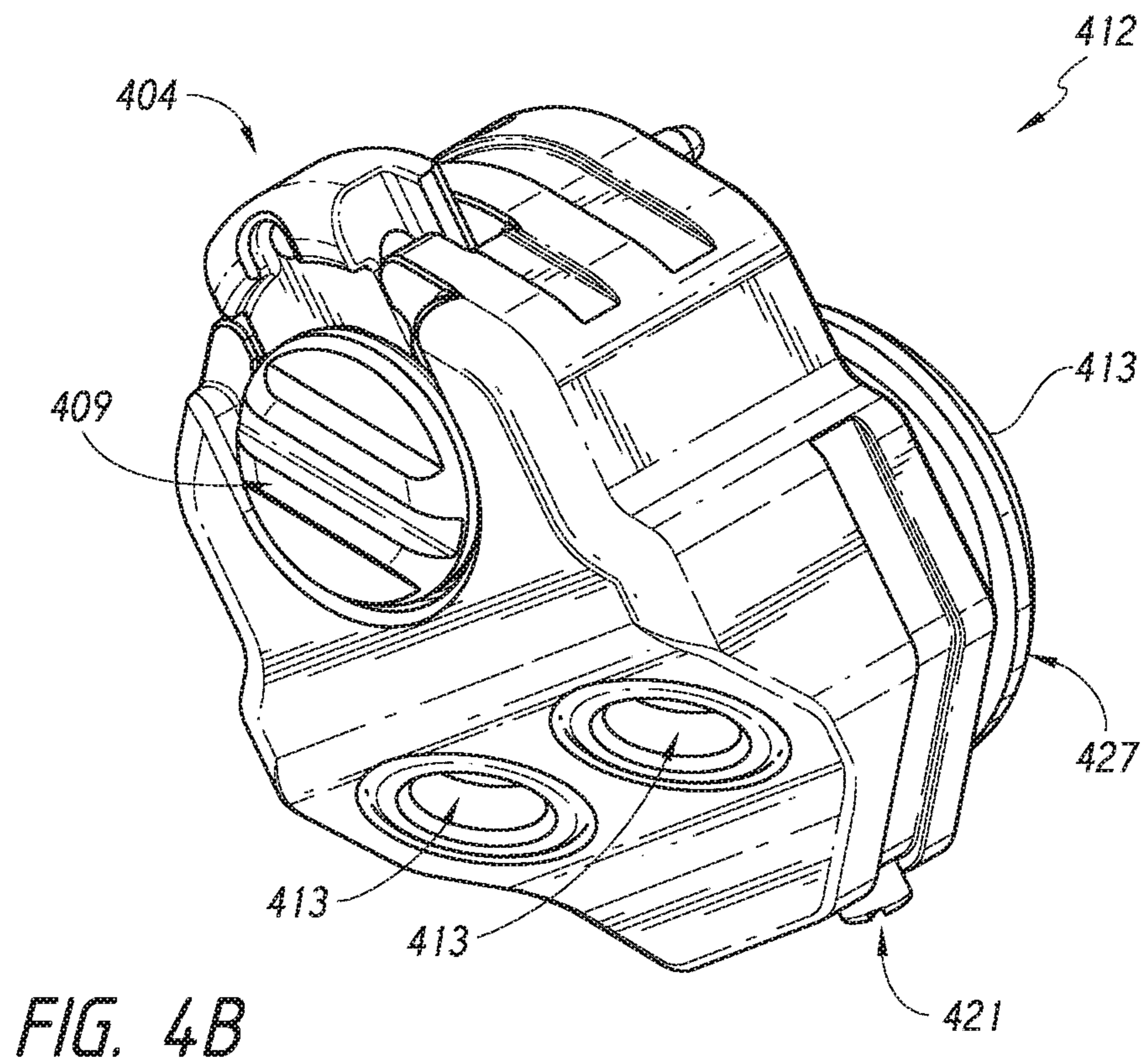
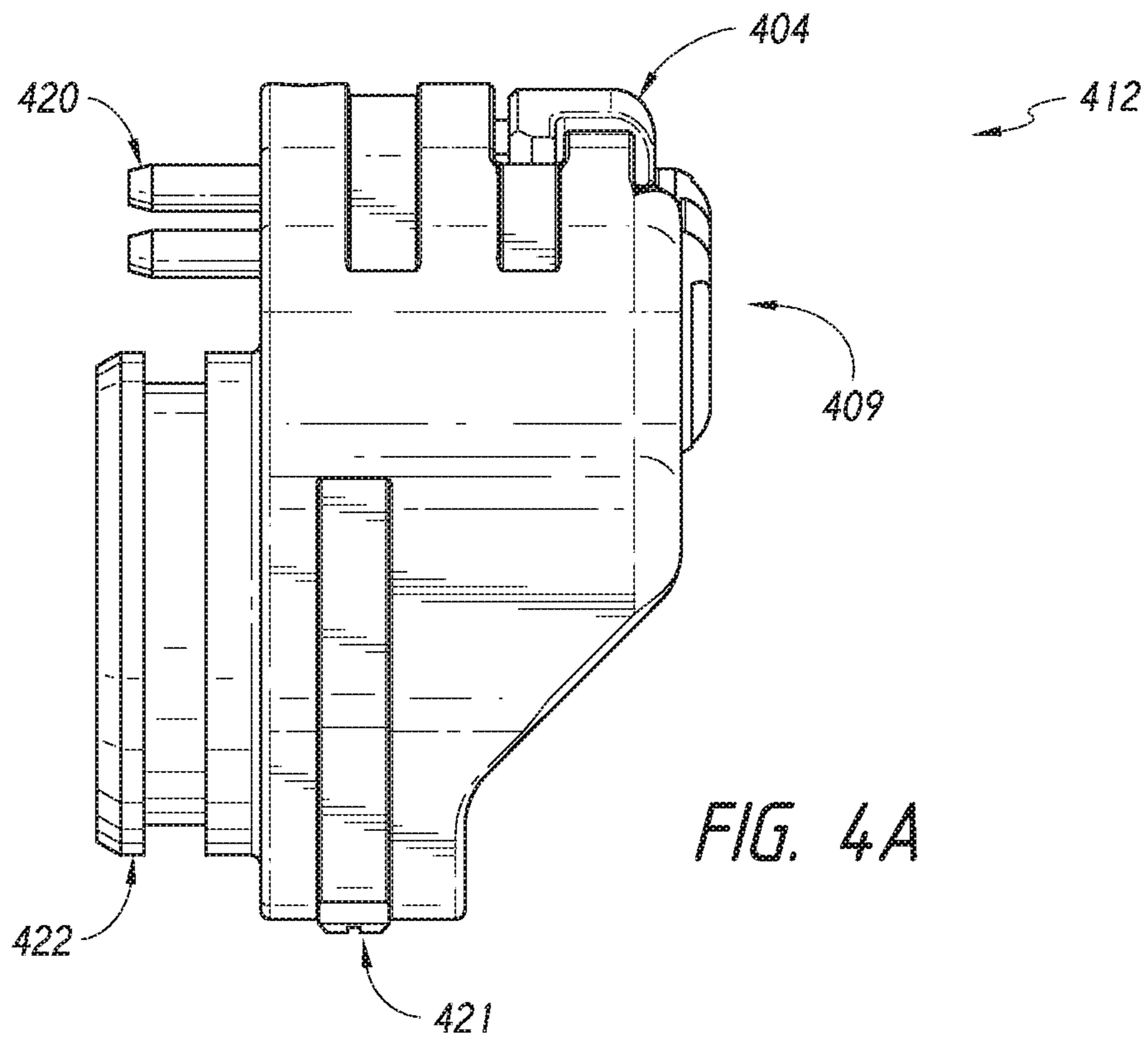


FIG. 3



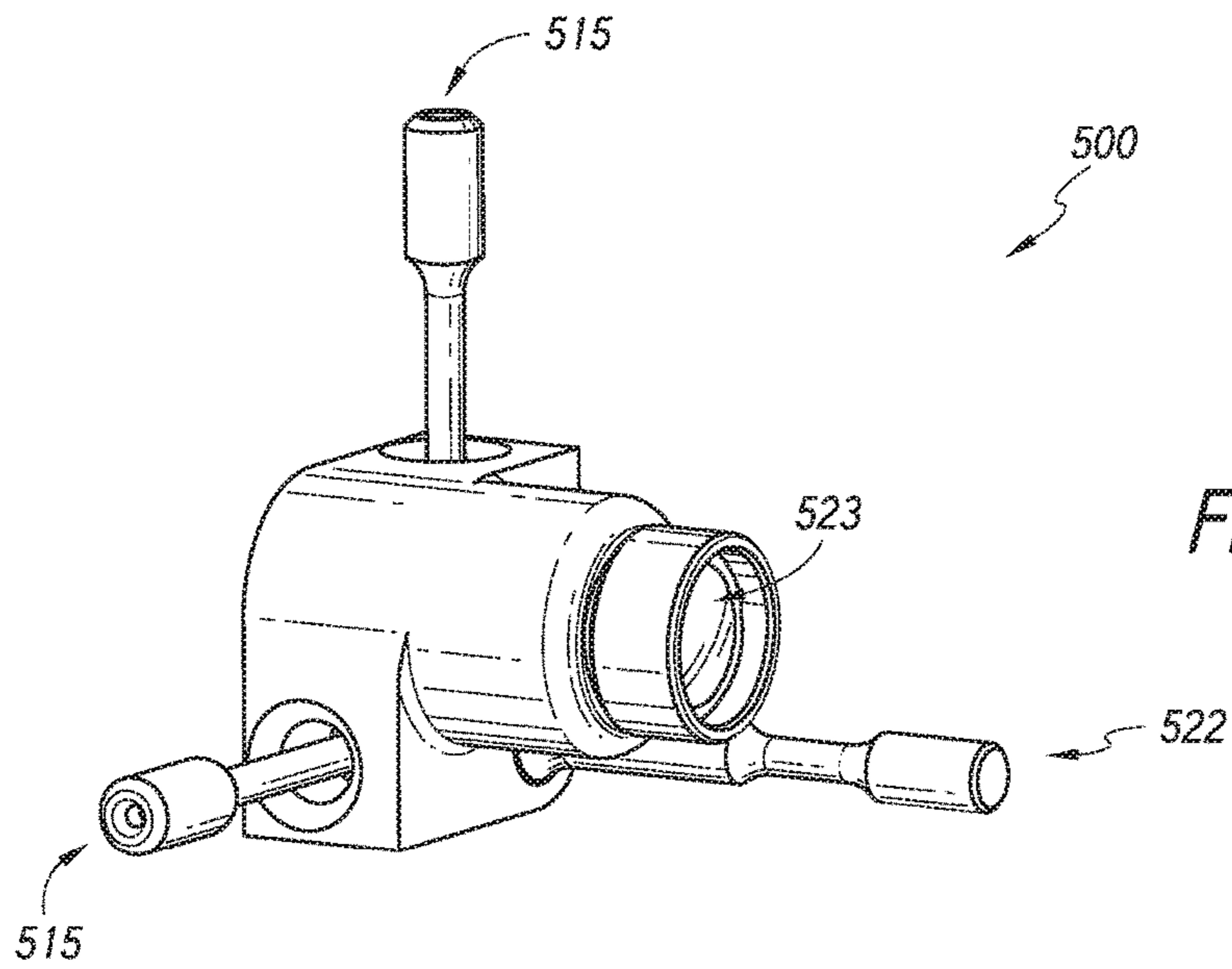
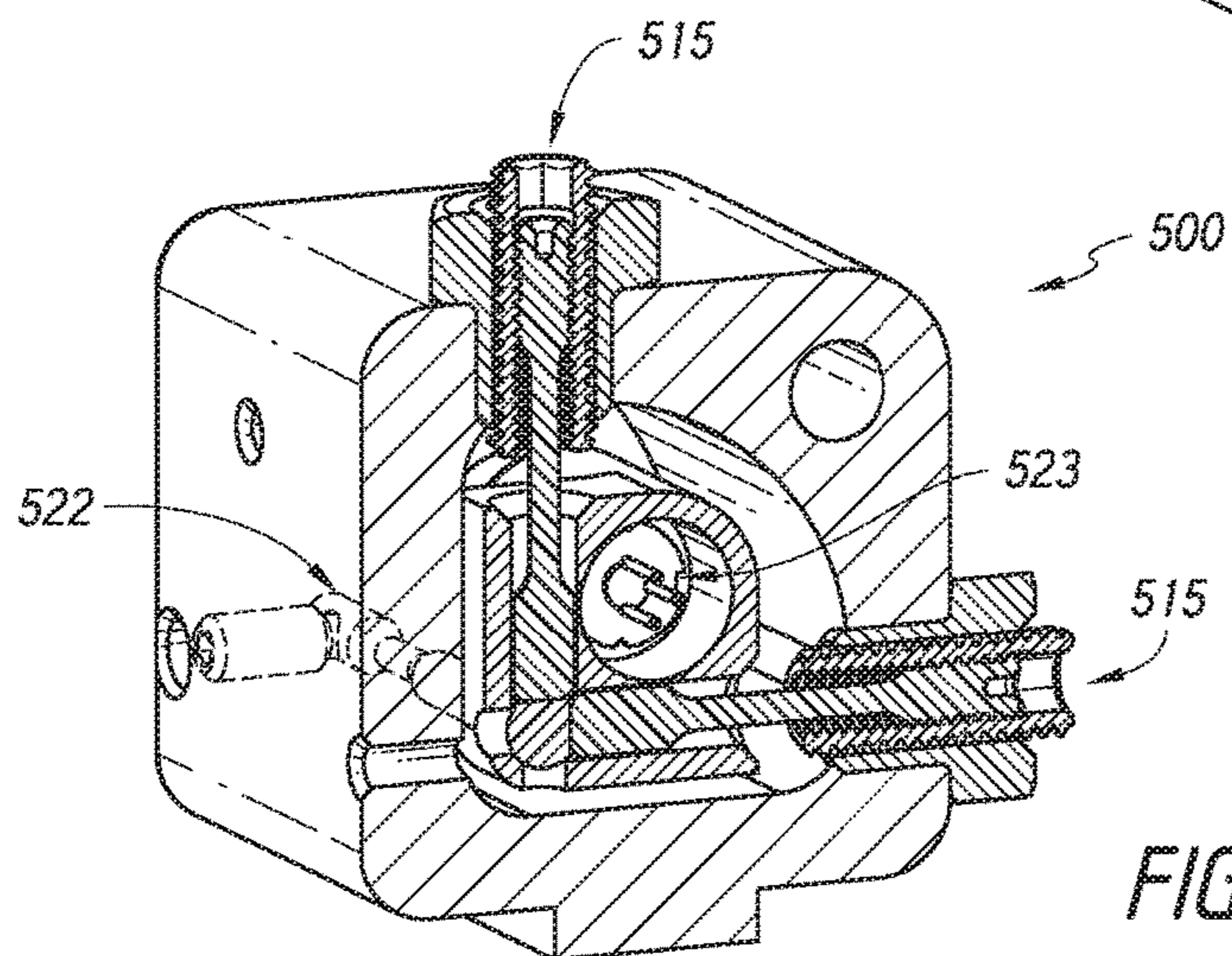
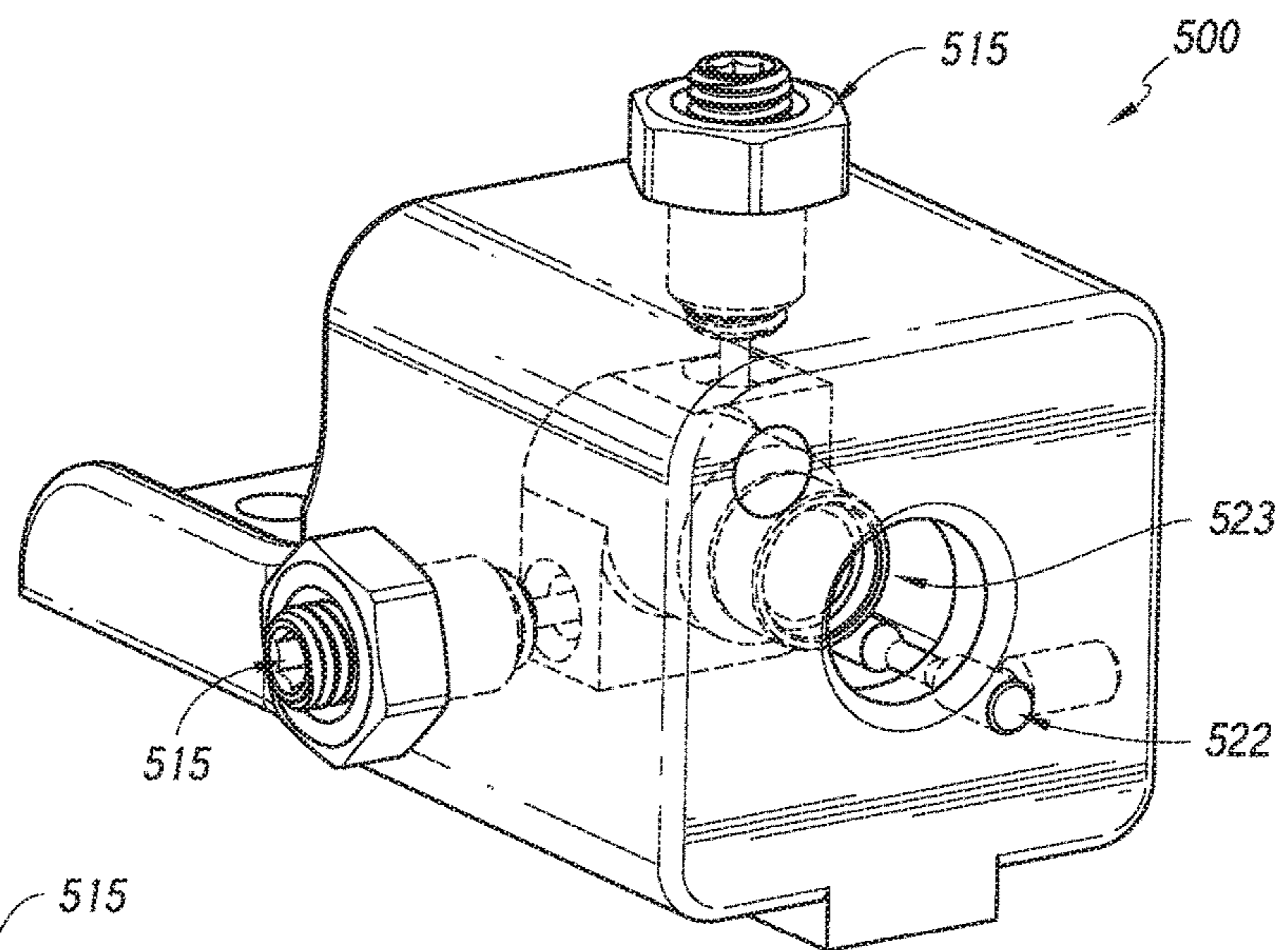


FIG. 5B



Range	Button	Emitter	Power	Range	Notes
LONG	Front (KILL)	Aiming Pointer Illuminator-4 deg Illuminator-16 deg Illuminator-60 deg	15 mW 150 mW - -	~1000 m ~400 m - -	High Power Pointer and High Power Narrow Illuminator for exterior use from 100 m to 400m
	Rear (ADMIN)	Aiming Pointer Illuminator-4 deg Illuminator-16 deg Illuminator-60 deg	15 mW - - -	~1000 m - - -	High Power Pointer with NO Illuminator intended for exterior use in targeting, communication, and direction from 50 m to 1000 m+
MID	Front (KILL)	Aiming Pointer Illuminator-4 deg Illuminator-16 deg Illuminator-60 deg	10 mW 20 mW 150 mW -	~500 m ~175 m ~100 m -	Medium Power Pointer with High Power Wide Spill Illuminator and Low Power "Hot Spot" intended for exterior use from 0 m to 100 m
	Rear (ADMIN)	Aiming Pointer Illuminator-4 deg Illuminator-16 deg Illuminator-60 deg	10 mW 80 mW 40 mW -	~500 m ~150 m ~50 m -	Medium Power Pointer with High Power Narrow Illuminator and Low Power Wide Spill intended for exterior use from 50 m to 150 m
SHORT	Front (KILL)	Aiming Pointer Illuminator-4 deg Illuminator-16 deg Illuminator-60 deg	1 mW - - 40 mW	~100 m - - ~15 m	Low Power Pointer and Smooth Illuminator intended for interior use from 0 m to 15 m
	Rear (ADMIN)	Aiming Pointer Illuminator-4 deg Illuminator-16 deg Illuminator-60 deg	- - - 5 mW	- - - ~5 m	Navigation Light Intended for covert maneuvering through difficult terrain

FIG. 6

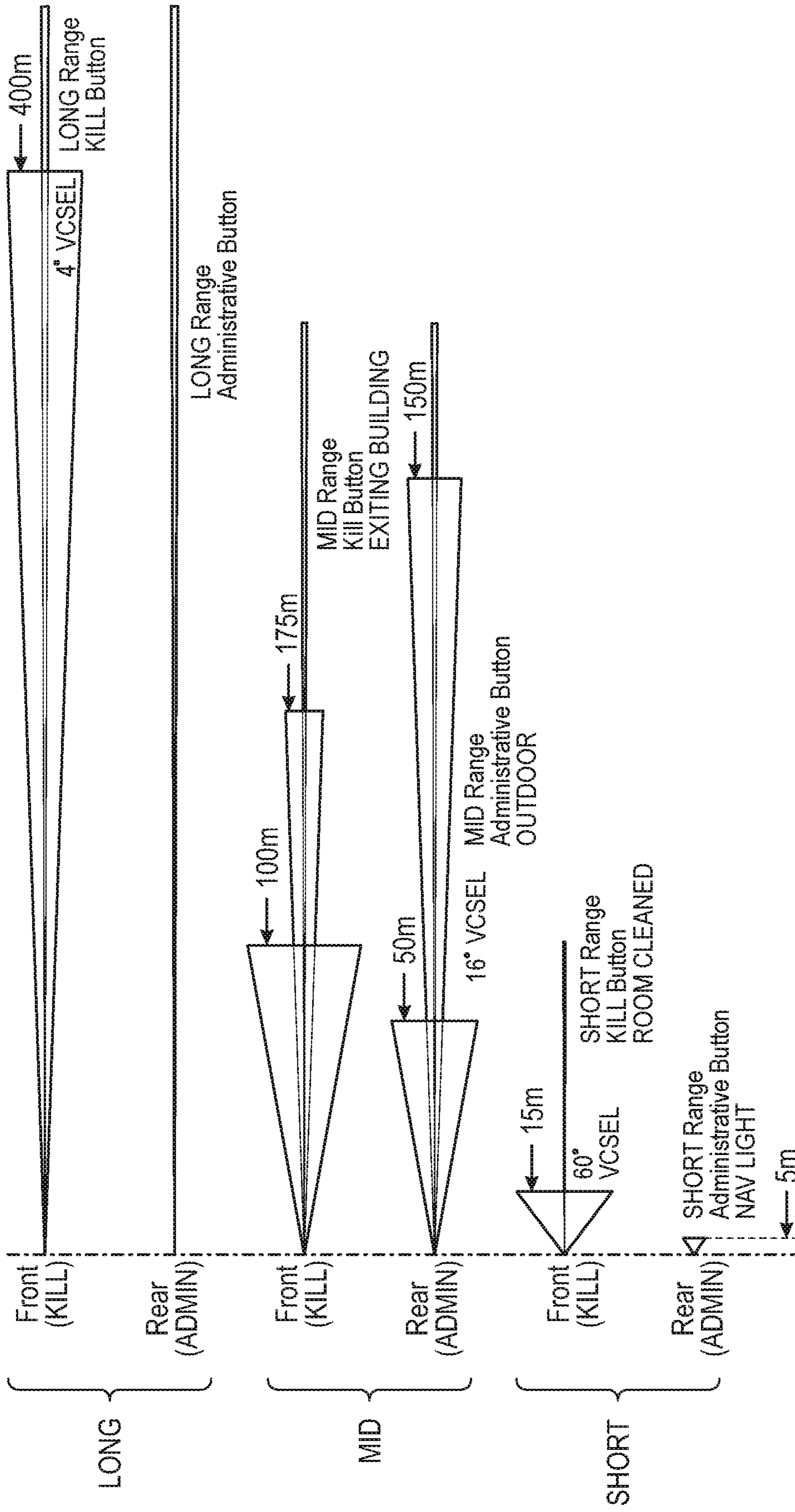


FIG. 7

MODULAR ILLUMINATION AND AIMING APPARATUS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 119(e), this application claims priority from, and the benefit of, U.S. provisional patent application No. 62/155,964 filed on May 1, 2015, the entire contents of which is hereby incorporated by reference for all purposes as if fully set forth herein.

This application is a continuation application of U.S. Application No. 16/459,761, filed on Jul. 2, 2019, which issued on Sep. 22, 2020 as U.S. Pat. No. 10,782,100, which is a divisional application of U.S. Application No. 15/142,597, filed on Apr. 29, 2016, which issued on Aug. 20, 2019 as U.S. Pat. No. 10,386,160.

FIELD OF INVENTION

This invention relates to combined illumination and laser aiming apparatuses. In some preferred embodiments these apparatuses may be mounted to weapons, for example, firearms.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Weapon-mounted aiming and illumination apparatuses allow users to rapidly acquire, identify, and engage targets in combat situations. These apparatuses are generally configured to allow for both aiming and illuminating operation in both daytime and nighttime scenarios. As such, these apparatuses often include illumination and aiming laser radiation that is detectable in both the visible and invisible spectrum. Because a user may engage with a target at a variety of distances, these apparatuses are generally configured to be operable in both short-range, immediate combat situations, and longer-range, distant target engagements. These apparatuses may also be used to visually communicate with allies or other non-combatant users over a distance. For example, in a nighttime situation, friendly users may use infrared illumination in combination with night-vision systems in order to communicate with, or identify potential targets to, one another.

Prior art illumination and aiming systems and apparatuses, while adjustable to different distance and illumination settings, have failed to provide users with intuitive and simple controls that would allow a user to rapidly adjust an illumination and aiming device to appropriate settings for a given situation and environment. Prior art systems are also cumbersome in size and shape, altering the characteristics of a user's weapon; lack any ergonomic or intuitive features to facilitate usage; and do not provide users with sufficient customization and mounting options.

There exists a need for an illumination and aiming apparatus that will allow a user to rapidly adjust the settings of the illumination and aiming functions in response to target position and environmental conditions for a particular engagement, without requiring the user to alter or adjust firing grip, or spend unnecessary time adjusting and changing illumination and aiming settings. There is also a need for an illumination and aiming apparatus that is modular and highly adaptable to a user's specific mission and environmental requirements. Further, there is a need for a compact and accurate apparatus for adjusting the illumination direction that does not change during use.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a robust, customizable, modular, compact, accurate, and ergonomic illumination and aiming apparatus configurable to be mounted on a variety of objects, including, but not limited to, a weapons system, such as a firearm. In other embodiments, the illumination and aiming apparatus may be hand-held, helmet-mounted, or vehicle-mounted.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an illumination and aiming apparatus that presents a user with intuitive and quick adjustment options in response to specific environmental and targeting conditions. It is a further object of the present invention to allow for modular customization of the functionality and ergonomics of the illumination and aiming apparatus by allowing the user to interchange various modular components, including for example, optical components, power units, and mounting components, among others.

The present invention also provides a robust, compact, and stable optical assembly for illumination and aiming optics that allows a user to ensure accuracy and repeatability of operation of the illumination and aiming apparatus.

The present invention further provides seals between apparatus components that shield internal and electrical optical components to harmful environmental conditions.

The present invention further provides magnetic switches that allow a user to change the modes of the illumination and aiming apparatus without exposing any internal optical or electrical components to environmental degradation. In one example embodiment, a Hall-effect sensor is provided in the lens cap of the optical head module to allow the user to change between visible radiation, invisible radiation, and off-state modes.

The present invention also provides a compact solution for implementing different illumination modes of the illumination and aiming apparatus by providing, in one example embodiment, a vertical cavity surface emitting laser ("VCSEL") array for the illumination source in the optical head module.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings are fully incorporated in, and form part of, this specification, and illustrate embodiments of the invention that, together with the description, serve to explain principles of the invention:

FIGS. 1A and 1B depict an example embodiment of a fully assembled modular illumination and aiming apparatus;

FIGS. 2A and 2B depict an example embodiment of an optical head module;

FIG. 3 depicts an example embodiment of a mounting module with low profile activation buttons;

FIGS. 4A and 4B depict an example embodiment of an end cap module;

FIGS. 5A, 5B, and 5C depict an example embodiment of an optical assembly that may be configured to be integrated into an optical head module;

FIG. 6 illustrates an example table of function sets for different modes of an example embodiment of a modular illumination and aiming apparatus; and

FIG. 7 illustrates the illumination and aiming radiation as described in the table of FIG. 6.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Reference will now be made in detail to embodiments of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the

accompanying drawings. While the invention is described in conjunction with these embodiments, it will be understood that the descriptions herein are not intended to limit the invention to these embodiments. On the contrary, the invention is intended to cover alternatives, modifications, and equivalents that may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims. Detailed description of components that are well known in the art may be omitted if that detailed description would confuse or obscure the description of the embodiments of the present invention.

FIGS. 1A and 1B depict an example embodiment of a fully-assembled, modular illumination and aiming apparatus **100** from a top and bottom view perspective. Illumination and aiming apparatus **100** comprises the combination of optical head module **110**, mounting module **111**, and end cap module **112**. Modules **110**, **111**, and **112** may be aligned by means of an internal alignment mechanism. Modules **110**, **111**, and **112** may also be configured to be in electrical connection with one another. The connections between modules **110**, **111**, and **112** may be sealed off from the environment, for example, by o-ring gaskets. Specific features of optical head module **110**, mounting module **111**, and end cap module **112** may each be described in more detail below with respect to other figures.

In general, optical head module **110** may contain multiple radiation sources, including, for example, both infrared and visible radiation sources. In one example embodiment, the multiple radiation sources may comprise an array of VCSEL elements. In one example embodiment, the user may toggle between radiation sources by changing or rotating the position of lens cap **105**. In some embodiments, lens cap **105** may be a propeller cap that is configured to rotate to different positions that correspond to different illumination modes. In some embodiments, lens cap **105** may include magnets that activate Hall-effect sensors in optical head module **110** that are configured to activate and deactivate different radiation sources within optical head module **110**. Lens cap **105** may also be configured to cover and protect radiation apertures that correspond to inactive radiation modes. For example, when lens cap **105** is positioned in an “off” position, the radiation apertures for both the invisible and visible modes will be at least partially covered and protected. When lens cap **105** is in the position that corresponds to the visible radiation mode, the radiation apertures for the invisible radiation mode will be at least partially covered and protected, while the radiation apertures for the visible radiation will be exposed. When lens cap **105** is in the position that corresponds to invisible radiation mode, the radiation apertures for the visible mode will be at least partially covered and protected, while the radiation apertures for the invisible radiation will be exposed. Mode indicator **108** may be configured to indicate the position of lens cap **105**, thus indicating to the user the current radiation mode configuration of illumination and aiming apparatus **100**. In other example embodiments, optical head **110** may include multiple visible and invisible radiation modes that may be selected by positioning lens cap **105**, e.g., green and red visible light modes.

Optical head module **110** may also include a range switch **106** that allows a user to select a range mode, depending on the distance from which the user is engaging a target or depending on the environment in which the user finds himself. In some embodiments, range switch **106** may be a linear, three-position switch that allows a user to toggle between short-range, mid-range, and long-range illumination and aiming modes. The switch may be configured to

provide tactile feedback to the user to confirm the mode to the user. Range switch **106** may work in combination with lock-out switch **107** to prevent a user from inadvertently switching the device into a long range mode. In some embodiments, a user may be required to depress lock-out switch **107** in order to move range switch **106** into a position that activates the long-range mode. The user may select the position of range switch **106** in combination with the position of lens cap **105** in order to configure illumination and aiming apparatus **100** with the appropriate radiation and range modes for the user’s particular environment and distance to a target.

Optical head module **110** may also include a rubberized covering in order to protect illumination and aiming apparatus **100** from shocks, scratches, dents, and/or physical damage. Similar protective coatings or coverings may be provided to protect the other modules that are combined to form illumination and aiming apparatus **100**.

Optical head module **110** may include adjustment screws **115** for adjusting the alignment of the optical assembly that includes the radiation sources, including adjustments to both azimuth and elevation. Optical head module **110** may also include positive contact or terminal **218** for the voltage source that may be housed in mounting module **111**. Optical head module **110** may also include a training mode switch. In one example embodiment, the training mode switch may comprise engagement ports **116** and **117** configured to allow a user to toggle illumination and aiming apparatus **100** into a training mode by moving a set screw from one training engagement port to the other. In one example embodiment, configuring the illumination and aiming apparatus into training mode may reduce the power of the illumination and aiming apparatus.

In general, mounting module **111** may include mounting hardware, activation buttons, and may also be configured to house an electrical power source for supplying a voltage to the radiation sources, for example, a lithium ion battery. Mounting module **111** may also include activation buttons **101** and **102**, and mount screw **103**. Activation buttons **101** and **102** may be configured to provide a user with different operation functions for illumination and aiming apparatus **100**. These operation functions may depend on the settings the user has selected for the type of radiation and the range to the target by way of lens cap **105** and range switch **106**, respectively. For example, for a given radiation and range setting, activation button **101** may activate a first operation function comprising a continuous aiming pointer and a higher power illumination beam, while activation button **102** may activate a second operation function comprising a pulsed aiming pointer and a lower power illumination beam. In an example embodiment, activation buttons **101** and **102** may be double clicked to enable illumination and aiming apparatus **100** to remain in a continuous “on” state for a given operation function. In other example embodiments, triple clicks on activation buttons **101** and **102** may provide a user with additional functionalities.

Activation buttons **101** and **102** may have a low-profile height that will allow a user to maintain a comfortable and effective firing grip while activating illumination and aiming apparatus **100**. In other example embodiments, additional or fewer activation buttons may be provided on mounting module **111** in order to provide a user with additional or fewer operation function options. In some example embodiments, mounting module **111** allows the bulk of the illumination and aiming apparatus **100** to be mounted off-axis from the central axis of a firearm so that interference between any additional adjacent components may be pre-

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vented (e.g., white light source, powered optics, etc.). Similarly, in some example embodiments, mounting module **111** allows activation buttons **101** and **102** to be mounted on axis with the firearm, so that the user may easily locate and activate illumination and aiming apparatus **100**.

Mount screw **103** may be configured, in combination with other hardware, to allow a user to clamp, or mount, illumination and aiming apparatus **100** to an object. In one example embodiment, mount screw **103** may be connected to a rail grabber **114** that is configured to mount illumination and aiming apparatus **100** to a 1913 Picatinny rail system or other alternative rail systems. In other example embodiments, mount screw **103** may be connected to a clamping system appropriate for mounting to a helmet, vehicle, or other firearm. In further example embodiments, mount screw **103** may be configured to match the thread and diameter of a mounting hole provided on an object upon on which illumination and aiming apparatus **100** is to be directly mounted.

Because illumination and aiming apparatus **100** may be mounted in a number of orientations (e.g., left-handed or right-handed directions), it is understood that the functionalities provided by activation buttons **101** and **102** may remain in the same order relative to the user. For example, in a first mounting orientation, activation button **102** may be closest to the user and may provide a first operation function, while activation button **101** may be further from the user and may provide a second operation function. In a second mounting orientation, where activation button **101** is closest to the user, and activation button **102** is further from the user, activation button **101** may provide the first operation function while activation button **102** may provide the second operation function. In this way, the operation functions of activation buttons **101** and **102** may be configured to remain consistent across all orientations. This allows illumination and aiming apparatus **100** to be configured to accommodate both right-handed and left-handed user preferences.

In general, end cap module **112** may include latching hardware and ports for remote activation systems. In one example, end cap module **112** may include end cap screw **109**, end cap latch **104**, and remote fire switch ports **113**. End cap latch **104** may be configured to engage with a set of alignment rails that are attached to optical head module **110** and extend internally through the body of mounting module **111**. End cap screw **109** may be configured to allow a user to fix the position of end cap latch **104** through tightening. Once end cap latch **104** is engaged with the alignment rails, this may allow the user to fix the combination of modules that comprise illumination and aiming apparatus **100** by tightening end cap screw **109**.

End cap module **112** may also include remote fire switch ports **113** that are configured to allow the user to activate illumination and aiming apparatus **100** remotely. In one example embodiment a user may attach tape switches to remote fire switch ports **113** in order to configure illumination and aiming apparatus **100** for remote activation.

End cap module **112** may also include the negative terminal or contact for the voltage source that may be housed in mounting module **111**.

FIGS. **2A** and **2B** depict an example optical head module **210** configured to be combined with other modular components to form an illumination and aiming apparatus. As described above with respect to FIGS. **1A** and **1B**, an example embodiment of an optical head module may include lens cap **205**, range switch **206**, lock-out switch **207**, and mode indicator **208**.

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Optical head module **210** may also include alignment rails **219** that are, upon insertion, configured to align optical head module **210** with other modules in a fully combined illumination and aiming apparatus. Alignment rails **219** are also configured to engage with an end latch in an end cap module, in order to allow a user to fix the arrangement of modules. Optical head module **210** also includes electrical contacts **218** that may be configured to provide electrical connections between optical head module **210** and the other modules that comprise a fully assembled illumination and aiming apparatus.

FIG. **3** depicts an example mounting module **311** that may be configured to be combined with an optical head module and an end cap module. As described above with respect to FIGS. **1A** and **1B**, example mounting module **311** may include mounting screw **303** and activation buttons **301** and **302**. As described above with respect to FIGS. **2A** and **2B**, mounting module **311** may be configured to allow for insertion of alignment rails in order to align modules that in combination comprise an illumination and aiming apparatus. Mounting module **311** may also be configured to be in electrical contact with other modules, for example, by accepting insertion of electrical contacts **218** from optical head module **210**.

FIGS. **4A** and **4B** depict an example end cap module that may be configured to be combined with an optical head module and a mounting module. As described above with respect to FIGS. **1A** and **1B**, example end cap module **412** may include end cap screw **409**, end cap latch **404**, and remote fire switch ports **413**. End cap module **412** may also include electrical contacts **420**, lanyard screw **421**, and sealing member **422**.

Retention screw **421** may be configured to attach a retention wire or catch, so that when the user removes the end cap, for example to replace the voltage source, the end cap will remain connected to another object or module. Sealing member **422** may comprise an o-ring gasket, and may be configured to seal the chamber encasing the voltage source against the mounting module. Electrical contacts **420** may be configured to maintain the end cap module in electrical connection with other modules that are combined to comprise the illumination and aiming apparatus. As described above with respect to FIGS. **2A** and **2B**, alignment rails **219** from an optical head module may terminate in end cap module **412**, and end cap latch **404** may be configured to latch into the alignment rails. When end cap screw **409** is tightened, end cap latch **404** may serve to lock the modules in place that comprise the illumination and aiming apparatus.

FIGS. **5A**, **5B**, and **5C** depict optical assembly **500** that may be integrated into an optical head module, for example, optical head module **110** of FIGS. **1A** and **1B** or optical head module **210** of FIGS. **2A** and **2B**.

Optical assembly **500** is configured to provide alignment for the radiation sources that may be integrated into an optical head assembly. Optical assembly **500** may be configured to provide zero-play adjustment that is capable of maintaining zero movement of optics **523**, even when subjected to heavy and sustained recoil, for example, as created by a firearm. Main flexure shaft **522** is configured to constrain optics **523** in an axial direction, while threaded flexure shafts **515** are configured to be adjusted to provide alignment of both azimuth (windage) and elevation of optical assembly **500**. Adjusting threaded flexure shafts **515** allows the user to align the radiation sources so that the radiation sources may emit radiation in a direction parallel to the bore axis of the weapon on which the illumination and

aiming apparatus is mounted. In an example embodiment, the divergence of the illumination radiation sources may be fixed. In other example embodiments, the divergence of the illumination radiation sources may also be adjusted by optical assembly **500**. The threaded flexure shafts maintain the optics **523** under tension, thus eliminating any need for spring mounts and removing any possibility of free play or bounce from optics **523**. In an example embodiment optics **523** may comprise both illumination and aiming radiation sources in combination with Risley prisms that are configured to allow the user to steer the aiming and illumination radiation in the desired direction.

As depicted in FIG. **5C**, threaded flexure shafts **515** may comprise a compound thread system that is configured to allow a user to achieve the required resolution for radiation beam adjustment. Compound thread systems eliminate the need for unreasonably fine thread pitch that would be necessary to achieve comparable resolution in adjustment by exploiting a differential thread pitch of a first threaded flexure shaft element **524** and the adjoining second threaded flexure shaft element **525** to increase the effective thread pitch. In one example embodiment, the optical source in optics **523** may comprise an array of VCSEL sources that are configured at fixed illumination power and divergences. These VCSEL sources may be configured to be used in combination to achieve desired illumination and aiming radiation as determined by the settings selected by the user. In other example embodiments, other radiation sources may be used such as LEDs, solid-state laser sources, arc lamps, etc.

The modules described above with respect to FIGS. **1-5** are understood to be exemplary. Other modules may be used in other embodiments of the invention, and the modules may be selected by the user in order to meet specific environmental and mission requirements. For example, alternative to the optical head module described in FIGS. **1** and **2** may include functionalities based on white light illumination, short-wave infrared (SWIR) aiming and illuminating lasers, joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) marking lasers; laser range finders; hail and warning systems; long-range precision engagement aiming and illumination; crew-served weapon aiming and illumination, or even non-optical functionalities, such as TASER or oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray functions. Alternative end cap modules may include configurations that allow for remote power, alternative tape switch plug, additional direct fire buttons, a user interface display, or other mission-critical, user-selected options. Alternative mounting modules may include mounting configurations that are specific to the particular weapon or system upon which the illumination and aiming apparatus is to be mounted (e.g., M-LOK, KeyMOD, direct mount, etc.). As discussed above, alternative mounting modules may also include different button configurations, as appropriate to the head and end cap module functionalities, or other desired functions sets.

It will be appreciated that there exist additional advantages of using separate modules to comprise an illumination and aiming apparatus. Modularity allows damaged or outdated component modules to be individually replaced without the need to replace the entire apparatus. A user may also install separate mounting modules on multiple weapons, allowing the user to share the same end cap and optical head modules amongst multiple weapons.

It will also be appreciated that the preset combination of settings provided to the user by the positions of the end cap, the range switch, and the activation buttons are configured to allow the user to quickly identify the settings of the

illumination and aiming apparatus. Because a user may be wearing gloves and/or be in a situation with limited visibility, it is important that the user be able to quickly identify the apparatus settings in order to quickly adjust to a changing environment or moving targets. Providing simple and intuitive setting options also minimizes the risk that the user may accidentally trigger a visible radiation mode that may inadvertently reveal the user's position.

Example functionalities of illumination and aiming device **100** will now be discussed in more detail with reference to FIGS. **6** and **7**. As explained above, the following example configuration merely illustrates a possible combination of function sets, and is not intended to limit the scope of the invention. FIG. **6** depicts a table of example function sets for which an example embodiment of illumination and aiming apparatus **100** can be configured. In all of the following examples, activation button **101** will be configured to provide the user with a mode that corresponds to an immediate threat, and activation mode **102** will be configured to provide the user with a mode that corresponds to a more administrative task.

When range switch **106** is fully extended over lock-out switch **107**, illumination and aiming device **100** will be in the "long-range" mode for both the visible and IR radiation positions of lens cap **105**. As FIG. **6** shows, in long-range mode, activation buttons **101** and **102** will provide different operation functions. In FIG. **6**, activation button **102** is referred to as the "Front (KILL)" button, while activation button **101** is referred to as the "Rear (ADMIN)" BUTTON. In this example mode, activation button **102** is configured to provide both a high power, 15 mW aiming pointer beam and a high power 150 mW narrow illumination beam with 4 degrees divergence. Activation button **101** is configured to provide only a 15 mW aiming beam without illumination. In this example, the aiming beam has a range exceeding 1000 meters, and the illumination beam will have a range of approximately 400 meters. This mode provides function sets that will likely be useful to a user in an exterior environment, engaging with targets at a distance.

When range switch **106** is in the middle position, illumination and aiming device will be in the "mid-range" mode for both the visible and IR radiation positions of lens cap **105**. In this example mid-range mode, activation button **102** is configured to provide both a medium power, 10 mW aiming pointer beam in combination with a high power, wide spill, 20 mW illumination beam with 4 degrees divergence and a 150 mW illumination beam with 16 degrees divergence. Activation button **101** is configured to provide a medium power, 10 mW aiming pointer beam in combination with a low power, wide spill 80 mW illumination beam with 4 degrees divergence and a 40 mW illumination beam with 16 degrees divergence. In this example, the aiming pointer beam has a range of approximately 500 meters, while the illumination beams have a range of approximately 50 to 100 meters. This mode of the illumination and aiming device provides function sets that could be used in both exterior and interior settings, where a target is likely to be engaged at a middle distance.

When range switch **106** is in the position that is closest to the user, illumination and aiming device **100** will be in the "short-range" mode for both the visible and IR radiation positions of lens cap **105**. As FIG. **6** shows, in short-range mode, activation buttons **101** and **102** will provide different operation functions. In this example mode, activation button **102** is configured to provide both a low power, 1 mW aiming pointer beam and a smooth 40 mW illumination beam with 60 degrees divergence. Activation button **101** is configured

to provide only a 5 mW illumination beam with 60 degrees divergence intended for use as a navigation light for covert maneuvering through difficult terrain. In this example, the aiming beam has a range of approximately 100 meters, and the illumination beam will have a range of approximately 0-15 meters. This mode of the illumination and aiming device provides function sets that could be used in environments where the user is likely to immediately engage with a target, for example, in a room clearing scenario.

It will be appreciated that the user will be able to quickly and easily switch between these function sets, and as such quickly adapt to a changing environment and changing target distance.

FIG. 7 provides a visual depiction of the different radiation modes described above with respect to the table of FIG. 6. As illustrated, the differing ranges and divergence angles of the combinations of radiation sources provided by each operation function set can be seen relative to each other. As illustrated in FIG. 7, the illumination and aiming radiation provided in each operation function set may substantially share the same optical axis.

Although a number of example embodiments of the invention have been described, it should be understood that numerous other modifications and embodiments of the invention can be devised by those skilled in the art that will fall within the scope of the principles of this disclosure. More particularly, various variations and modifications are possible in the component parts and/or arrangements of the inventive subject matter within the scope of the disclosure, the drawings, and the appended claims. In addition to variations and modifications in the component parts and/or arrangements, alternative uses and applications of the invention will also be apparent to those skilled in the art.

What is claimed is:

1. An illumination and/or aiming apparatus comprising:
 - a first switch configured to select a radiation type for illumination or aiming;
 - a second switch configured to select characteristics of the radiation type; and
 - at least one activation element configured to activate a first mode of the apparatus, wherein the first mode of the apparatus is determined by a position of the first switch in combination with a position of the second switch; and
 - wherein the first switch is further configured to enable the positioning of multiple apertures.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first switch comprises a magnetic end cap configured to activate Hall-effect sensors.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first switch comprises an end cap configured to be rotated.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the second switch comprises a linear switch.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the radiation type is selected from one of a visible or invisible spectrum.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the characteristics include divergence and power.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a second activation element that is configured to activate a second mode of the apparatus,

wherein the second mode of the apparatus is determined by the position of the first switch in combination with the position of the second switch.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the first mode is different from the second mode.

9. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the at least one activation element is a button.

10. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the second activation element is a button.

11. An optical mode selector for use in an apparatus for illumination and/or aiming comprising:

an cap configured to rotate around an axis of the apparatus, thereby selecting an optical mode of the apparatus, wherein the cap includes multiple apertures configured to pass illumination and/or aiming radiation corresponding to the optical mode.

12. The optical mode selector of claim 11, wherein the cap further comprises magnets configured to interact with Hall-effect sensors.

13. The optical mode selector of claim 12, wherein the Hall-effect sensors are configured to activate and/or deactivate optical radiation sources.

14. The optical mode selector of claim 11, further comprising at least one vertical cavity surface emitting laser (VCSEL) configured to provide the illumination and/or aiming radiation corresponding to the optical mode.

15. The optical mode selector of claim 11, wherein the optical mode comprises one of visible or invisible radiation.

16. The optical mode selector of claim 11, further comprising a linear switch.

17. The optical mode selector of claim 16, wherein the linear switch is configured to select characteristics of the optical mode.

18. The optical mode selector of claim 17, wherein the characteristics include divergence and power.

19. The optical mode selector of claim 11, further comprising at least one activation element.

20. The optical mode selector of claim 19, wherein the at least one activation element is a button.

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